



## CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

March 3, 2000

### **S. 1680**

### **Veterans Benefits Administration Improvement Act of 1999**

*As introduced on October 1, 1999*

S. 1680 would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and report to the Congress on a comprehensive plan for improving the processing of claims for veterans compensation and pensions. The plan would have to include mechanisms for improving the training and accountability of claims adjudicators, identifying and correcting errors in the claims adjudication process, and ensuring the consistency of the department's internal review process with government standards for independent internal audits. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) would be required to develop quantifiable goals for measuring its efforts and report semiannually on the implementation and progress of the plan. The bill would also require VA to report to the Congress on any modifications to the plan before they are implemented.

CBO estimates that implementing this bill would cost less than \$500,000 annually. The database that VA uses to identify errors would have to be modified to track errors by disability type and to identify errors in medical exams. Based on information from VA, we expect that the cost of these programming tasks would be negligible. Collecting the information, however, could require VA to hire additional personnel to review cases, but the cost of additional staff would probably not exceed \$400,000 annually. CBO believes that VA already has significant efforts underway in training, setting goals, and conducting internal reviews; the costs of reporting on those initiatives would be insignificant.

Because this bill would not affect direct spending or receipts, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply. This bill contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

This estimate was prepared by Evan W. Christman. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.